



Soul and Ego

The Fundamental Partnership

by

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I have a great belief in spiritual force, but I think we have to realize that spiritual force alone has to have material force with it so long as we live in a material world. The two together make a strong combination.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

There are two fundamental aspects of our being: soul and ego. Many spiritual teachings, in essence, encourage us to focus only on soul and to get rid of the ego. However, I would like to offer a different perspective. The truth is that we cannot function in the physical world without ego because ego is the physical aspect of our being. Without ego, soul has no way to move and fulfill its mission in the physical world. Therefore, to reach our greatest success and share our greatest gifts with the world requires forging a dynamic partnership between these two fundamental aspects of our being.

Soul is the portal through which Consciousness enters your life. It is your connection to the spiritual and non-physical world. It is your essence, the absolute truth of your being. Essence is purity. Essence, like water, is a concentrated, pure substance or energy that, when added to something else, brings that thing to life. Because soul is essence, when you engage anything from its soul, you bring that thing to life. And when you engage in any activity, task, project, or relationship from your soul, you bring life to it.

Your soul lives both in your physical body and in Consciousness at the same time. To use a term from quantum physics, you could say that the soul is nonlocal—it exists everywhere in time and space simultaneously. Therefore, soul is your bridge to the greater Consciousness. It sees and understands the big picture of life. Soul energy

is huge and expansive. Its greatest desire is to know and experience its greatest potential. Its natural state is creation and evolution. It thrives on adventure, learning, discovery, and growth.

Ego, on the other hand, manifests through your physical body, your personality, your talents and skills, the aspects of you that are connected to the physical world. It is the part of you that “thinks” and distinguishes itself from what it thinks about. It is the part of you that experiences and reacts to the outside world and to others. It is also the part of you that organizes things, makes a plan, and gets things done.

Ego’s primary responsibility is to ensure your survival. Its job is to be sure that nothing threatens your well-being—to do whatever it perceives as necessary to make sure that you are well-taken care of for all of your physical and emotional needs. Therefore, ego thrives on safety, security, and guarantees.

However, ego’s awareness is limited to what is available through the five physical senses—what it can literally see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. It has no awareness of anything beyond this physical realm. Therefore, its rational thought process has difficulty understanding that there is such a thing as soul. If it can’t see something or touch it, ego will be very skeptical that it exists.

Because of this limited awareness, ego tends to be very distrustful of anything that is not tangible to its physical senses. It is very uncomfortable with ideas of adventure, growth, and discovery and tends to be suspicious of anything that it has not already experienced or does not already know without a doubt to be safe and secure.

Ego gets a lot of criticism for making “bad choices” or being self-serving or arrogant. Yet when you consider that it is given the enormous job of protecting you and making sure you are safe, you can understand that perhaps from its perspective, ego is just trying to do its job in the best or perhaps the only way it knows how. When ego puts up resistance, becomes self-centered, or tries to take over a situation, it may just be

doing whatever *it* perceives, from its limited perspective, is necessary to assure first your survival, and then ultimately your success in the physical world.

Ego understands how the physical world works. It knows all about the rules and structures of daily life, because all of those rules and structures were designed by egos in order to create a space in which egos can live together in relative accord. However, ego knows nothing of the vast, unseen, non-physical realms of the greater Consciousness. In fact, it has a great fear of those realms because to ego, they are completely unknown. Soul, on the other hand, knows nothing of the rules and structures of daily life, yet is totally at home in the vastness of possibility, the incredibly vast realm of Consciousness, and with exploring the unknown. Without ego as the physical component of being, soul cannot have a life in the physical realm. And without the expansive awareness of soul, ego lacks inspired direction. So soul needs ego in order to have a physical world experience, and ego needs soul for the “big-picture” view.

Despite the fact that ego has very limited awareness, we give it huge responsibilities and place enormous expectations on its performance. We even expect ego to take care of and nurture soul. However, because the soul has the greater awareness, in truth it is up to soul to embrace ego. The more soul can nurture ego, support it to learn and grow, and give it the reassurance it needs, the more ego can begin trusting soul and its big ideas and desires. The more ego can be assured that growth, transformation, and evolution will lead to even greater well-being, safety, and success, the more it is willing to surrender to the leadership of soul and explore new territory—to step into the unknown.

At least once in your life, you have probably experienced being incredibly excited about a big step you were about to take—perhaps a trip to a new part of the world, a career change, a big investment, a move to a new city or country. Your soul was

eagerly anticipating this step and the new possibilities that would be available once the step was taken. Yet just as you were finalizing your plans or were about to take the plunge, a voice inside screamed, “Are you crazy? Do you realize the risks you are taking?” Perhaps that voice went on to say things like, “You’re going to lose all your money,” or “Your husband will never go along with this,” or “People will think you’ve lost your mind,” or any number of arguments ego will make in its desperation to keep you in a space and way of life that it perceives to be safe.

In those moments, if we don’t understand both the limited awareness of ego and its deep need for security, as well as the bigger vision of the soul, we may unfortunately retreat from our great adventure and talk ourselves out of the very thing that the soul was longing for. And as we return to the “safe” life where things are known and predictable, deep inside it feels as if a part of us dies.

However, there is another way. When ego slams on the brakes, we can pause to consider whether there is any part of what it is saying that is, in fact, true. We can check to see that there is not something we have overlooked or that we haven’t considered, and if we recognize that ego has some legitimate concerns, take time to address them. However, when we recognize that ego is operating out of fear, or that the risk of *not* embarking on the new life is greater than the risk of losing something of the present, it is soul’s job to wrap its arms around ego and say, “Listen, I know you’re afraid. It’s alright. We’re going someplace you’ve never been before. But I’ve seen a bigger picture than you’ve been able to see and I am pretty sure we’re going to be alright. And I need your help with this. I can’t do this alone. You are so important to this venture. I need your great organizational skills for this to happen. So take a deep breath—we’re going to do this anyway.” And then we take the plunge. Soon we are in the new place or doing something a different way, and ego realizes that nothing bad happened. It begins to

learn to trust soul.

In time, we come to yet another big step. Ego may become afraid again, remembering perhaps that the first time turned out alright, yet not being at all sure that it can happen again. Once again, soul wraps its arms around ego, asks what it needs, reassures it, and says, “I’ve seen a bigger picture and I really think we’re going to be fine. And your skills and abilities are such an important part of this step. I can’t do it without you. So take deep breath and here we go.” In time, once again ego realizes that nothing bad happened. In fact, it is actually enjoying this new life, and its trust in soul deepens. A dynamic and powerful partnership is born—soul as the visionary and ego creating a strategy for bringing the vision to life and moving into action.

Step by step, ego can be transformed from a fear-based existence fighting for survival and pushing for success, into becoming the hands and feet of your soul. It can become the vehicle through which soul accomplishes its mission. In fact, until ego feels safe enough to trust soul and surrender to its leadership, soul *cannot* accomplish its mission. It is up to the soul to nurture the ego and help it expand, grow, and mature. It is up to the soul to recognize and acknowledge ego’s great skills and abilities, encourage ego’s further development, and call it forth in service of something bigger. As the ego matures, it blossoms in its magnificence, realizing its full potential as a partner not only in the powerful creation of your life, but in giving your unique gifts to the world. Ego matures into its greatest potential and a powerful partnership comes into its own.

This may not be how you are accustomed to thinking about ego. However, as we open to our greatest potential, that potential will need our expansive souls *served by* our powerful and magnificent egos to become fully realized. It is critical that soul leads the way because soul has the big-picture view. Metaphorically speaking, soul is the

captain of the ship and ego is the crew. Soul has the sense of vision and direction, and ego knows how to bring the vision into reality. When ego takes over as captain, we are in trouble because ego will make decisions and take action based on very limited awareness. We must embrace our soul's gifts and talents *and* our ego's ability to harness them for creation and accomplishment in the world in order to be most effective as transformative workers in the world and to help those we serve do the same.

Let's pause here to explore soul and ego and how they work together. There are several places in this exercise where I suggest that you take time to write about what you are experiencing, so you might want to have a notebook or journal handy before you begin.

Exploration and Discovery: The Soul and Ego Partnership

Close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath, allowing it to find its own natural, steady, even rhythm. Don't try to manipulate your breath in any way—just let it find its own natural flow. Take your time.

Letting go of any preconceived notion of what your experience should be, imagine your soul floating out in front of you. How does it show itself to you? Does it have a shape or a color? A texture? Does it have a sound? A fragrance or a taste? What does it feel like? How would you describe it energetically? What are the qualities of your soul?

Ask your soul to tell you its greatest strength. And then ask that strength how it wants to be expressed now in your life.

Ask your soul what makes it unique. What makes it different from someone else's soul?

Ask your soul what it wants more of from you. And then what it wants less of.

Then imagine your soul floating into your body and notice where it lands. Where does your soul live in your body? How do you experience its presence within you? Take a moment to settle into that feeling and experience.

What is the overall feeling in your body and emotion when you settle into your soul? Notice the quality of your breath—is it shallow or deep, tense or relaxed? How do you experience your energy when you are settled into your soul?

After a few moments in your soul, pause to record in your journal any thoughts or feelings you may have.

Now returning to a place of calm, shift your awareness to your ego and imagine it floating out in front of you. Meet your ego as if for the first time. How does it show itself to you? Does it have a shape or a color? A texture? Does it have a sound? A fragrance or a taste? What does it feel like? How would you describe it energetically? What are the qualities of your ego?

Ask your ego to tell you its greatest strength—how it truly serves you the best. And then ask that strength how it wants to be expressed through you now.

Ask your ego if there is anything it still needs in order to feel safe and ready to partner with your soul. If it is clear that there is an issue to be addressed, take time to ask questions and have a conversation with your ego to explore this issue. Be curious, gentle, and compassionate, so that

your ego has a safe space in which to express its needs. Do your best to reassure your ego and help it feel safe and secure.

Then imagine your ego floating into your body and notice where it lands. Where does your ego live in your body? How do you experience its presence within you? Take a moment to settle into that feeling and experience.

Settled into your ego, what is the overall physical and emotional sensation in your body? Notice the quality of your breath—is it shallow or deep, tense or relaxed? How do you experience your energy when you are settled into your ego? Making no judgment of one being better than the other, how is this feeling different than when you are settled into your soul?

Take a moment once again to capture thoughts and feelings in your journal.

Now shift your awareness away from your ego for a bit and breathe into your soul once again. Allow your soul to expand to fill your entire body. Imagine that your body is hollow and that every bit of that hollow space is filled with your soul. Then let your ego expand to fully inhabit and serve your soul. Notice how your energy shifts. How does this feel? What do you experience?

Now just for a moment go back to your experience of soul and ego being separate and each in their own locations in your body. First, go just to your soul, separated from ego. Breathe into your soul and ground yourself there—in your soul only. Notice how this feels—how you experience soul alone without ego.

Then leave your soul for a moment and ground yourself in ego alone. Notice how this feels—how you experience ego alone without soul.

Finally, return to soul awareness, expand your soul to fill your whole body, and then expand the ego to fully inhabit and serve as the hands and feet of your soul—soul and ego together in partnership. What do you feel? How do you experience this?

Being totally honest with yourself, where do you live most of the time? Do you live in ego alone, in soul alone, or in some level of integration? What are you learning from this experience? Take time to record your experience in your journal.

On its own, ego thrives on safety and security. It finds that security in what it knows. It makes choices based on past experience, and has a vested interest in keeping you from entering into new and unknown territory. Soul, because it lives in Consciousness as well as in the body, finds its passion in the realm of potential and possibility. It is always seeking its next opportunity to learn and grow.

Ego can be very clever at tricking you into believing that you have gone far enough. It can easily talk you out of important “once and for all” commitments. Soul, on the other hand, will advocate for breakthrough. When we do not go for the breakthrough, we create a separation between ego and soul. When we make the “once and for all” commitment, on the other hand, we close the gap between them by calling forth ego to see the bigger picture of soul and become its servant and ally for achieving our greatest potential.

Our past is a story we know well, and we are conditioned to believe that the past is all we have to guide us. Our potential is a story that may call out to us, yet ego has no

model for tapping into that story and letting it guide us. Ego's nature is to return to what it knows, while soul's nature is to dive head-first into the future adventure. All information of the past, present, and future exists within Consciousness. In Consciousness, the potential of the future exists just as dynamically as does a memory of the past. Because of the nonlocal quality of soul in time and space, soul actually has already experienced the potential. Therefore, to soul, there is no "unknown". It knows the path to take. However, without this knowledge and information from soul, ego can remain paralyzed in fear and keep us from moving forward or misdirect our path. Through the expansive awareness of soul we can access the greater Consciousness and remember what it is like to live that potential in the future. Soul can then inform ego about the potential so that what was unknown to ego becomes known. This can help ego find the courage to step into its greater role as the hands and feet of soul.

When enough of us choose to follow soul, dive into the potential, and invite the strengths and talents of ego to fully inhabit and serve the soul, we begin to create a new and "known" paradigm for the mass consciousness to grow into. As critical mass occurs, we transform the way our culture lives, works, is governed, and does business.

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